United Nations E/2018/SR.32

Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
28 June 2018

Original: English

2018 session
27 July 2017–26 July 2018
Special meeting on "Towards sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies through participation of all"

Summary record of the 32nd meetings
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Wednesday, 23 May 2018, at 10 a.m.

President: Ms. Chatardova ..... (Czechia)

Contents

Opening of the special meeting

Interactive dialogue on "Global trends and emerging issues: Building sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies in a changing world"

Interactive dialogue on "Innovative policy approaches and technologies to foster participation of all"

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent as soon as possible to the Chief of the Documents Management Section (dms@un.org).

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (http://documents.un.org/).

18-08288 (E)

Please recycle

The meeting was called to order at 10.15 a.m.

Opening of the special meeting

1. The President said that economic, social and political marginalization were often interlinked. Where groups were systematically excluded from political or economic life, societies risked reversing hard-won development gains. On the other hand, inclusive political, social and economic systems were more dynamic and better able to achieve sustainable development at all levels. In the era of increased globalization, societies were faced with diverse, complex and interconnected challenges relating to climate change, urbanization, disaster risk, forced migration and socioeconomic inequalities within and among countries. The international community must examine the links between those challenges to identify policy instruments that would have a long-term impact on creating resilient and inclusive communities.

2. In the meetings leading up to the special meeting, stakeholders had identified the need to strengthen and institutionalize mechanisms to engage all actors in decision-making and had stressed the importance of local governments in promoting awareness of the Sustainable Development Goals among local communities and mobilizing all stakeholders in their implementation. They had underscored the need to strengthen mutual trust between the public and private sectors and had acknowledged the contributions that principled business models could make in building more resilient and inclusive societies. The vital role that academic institutions could play in supporting good governance, contributing to public policymaking at all levels and providing quality and timely disaggregated data in support of the Sustainable Development Goals was also recognized. The preparatory meeting, held in March 2018 in Prague, had showcased approaches to foster participation in areas such as education, economic development and good governance, with a view to identifying positive practices that could be replicated and scaled up to advance inclusion and participation at all levels. The participants had stressed that equal participation in political and public affairs was a right that must be respected and preserved. Measures to foster participation and inclusion should therefore be substantive, long-term and systematic in nature.

3. In the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, Member States had recognized that fostering inclusive societies based on strong and transparent institutions was an indispensable requirement for sustainable development. While there had been concerted efforts and signs of progress across the board, the current pace of improvement did not yet meet the aspirations of the 2030 Agenda. Globally, more than 190 million people remained unemployed, violence and conflicts damaged the fabric of already fragile societies and increasing urbanization was straining ageing infrastructures and natural resources. Moreover, the unprecedented 2017 Atlantic hurricane season had demonstrated the destructive impact of climate change on societies, economies and the environment.

4. The interconnectedness and the scale of those challenges called for a paradigm shift in the international response, and the 2030 Agenda had already paved the way forward. An interdisciplinary, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approach was needed to build and maintain sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies. The spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness had significant potential to accelerate human progress, bridge the digital divide and help develop inclusive and people-centred societies. In order to advance efforts to that end, the special meeting would explore further collective action in addressing issues of participation and inclusion within the context of the 2030 Agenda. To achieve sustainable development, the international community must foster the constructive and meaningful participation of all sectors of society and enhance social cohesion to identify appropriate context-based solutions. It should carefully select approaches and deploy emerging technologies and other instruments that could foster sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies and increase participation in the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals.

5. **Ms. Mohammed** (Deputy Secretary-General of the United Nations) said that the special meeting spoke to the heart of the 2030 Agenda, which was an agenda of the people, by the people and for the people. And it was an Agenda to be achieved with the people. The success of the international community's collective journey to 2030 would greatly depend on how it involved Government, parliaments, local authorities, indigenous peoples, civil society, the scientific and academic community and the private sector. It was therefore a collective responsibility, and the transformation promised would only be achieved by engaging all actors across society.

6. In March 2018, she had taken part in the preparatory sessions in Prague for the special meeting. She had left those discussions more convinced than ever as to the importance of participation, consultation and engagement in advancing the collective goals of the international community. Participants had discussed how effective public participation could help inform better laws, policies and government programming; better fight corruption and better foster accountability.

They had also discussed how open, inclusive and constructive engagement between subnational authorities, businesses and civil society groups could give rise to solutions that would simply not be possible otherwise, and how deliberative decision-making was an essential element in preserving social cohesion. As intolerance, marginalization and xenophobia grew in some countries, the international community needed to redouble its efforts to engage and listen to the full spectrum of views in society. The Prague meeting, and an honest assessment of the world, also showed that the international community often put barriers in place that hindered effective participation, including legal, funding and political barriers, and excluded people, especially the most vulnerable, from taking part in processes that would affect their daily lives. That narrative must be changed. Inclusive sustainable development, rooted in respect for and protection of human rights, was paramount. It was the foundation for universal prosperity and well-being and a healthy planet, and it was the best defence against violent conflict which so rapidly and dramatically eroded development gains.

7. She encouraged participants in the special meeting to be mindful of five core areas that demanded greater attention. The first, in line with Goal 16, related to the need to foster an enabling environment for participation, one that supported tolerance towards differing views and public participation in its many forms. There was a need for responsible leadership, legal frameworks that adhered to norms and standards, and greater investment in transparent and accountable institutions. The second area related to the participation of women. In the past year, in particular, women's movements had exerted their influence as powerful agents of change. The international community must go further and ensure that women and girls were centrally involved in all efforts to realize the Sustainable Development Goals, especially at the country level. The third area related to the contribution of young people. In Prague and elsewhere, she had been able to hear from young people who were highly motivated to implement the 2030 Agenda, but who were impatient with those who impeded change. Platforms must be made available to facilitate youth engagement with Government and other decision-making bodies. It would not be possible to achieve the necessary change at the speed and scale needed without their engagement, ideas and leadership. It was, after all, their future. The fourth area related to viewing climate action not only as central to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, but also as a catalyst of greater participation. Climate action could unlock vast potential economic growth in all regions and for all people. Investing in the green economy, resilience and technology could create jobs and ensure emergency preparedness for the most vulnerable countries. The fifth and final area related to processes around implementing and financing the 2030 Agenda. National implementation plans and reviews conducted in line with the high-level political forum on sustainable development must be prepared in an open and inclusive manner so that they helped to expand learning and understanding of the Sustainable Development Goals and their implementation. The views of the most vulnerable must be heard clearly to inform solutions for better investments in people and the environment. The international community must bring together the relevant actors to accelerate the mobilization of public and private, domestic and international finance for the 2030 Agenda, as funding gaps were vast and urgent.

8. The 2030 Agenda required the participation of all actors to ensure that no one was left behind and that all could enjoy prosperity, dignity and opportunity in a world of peace. The Council was a central platform for inclusive debate, innovative thinking, consensus-building and coordination to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. The reinforcement of that function, with an emphasis on accountability and results, was a priority. She called on participants to join efforts for a sustainable, resilient and inclusive future.

9. **Mr. Smrž** (Deputy Minister of Environment of Czechia) said that his country had decided to focus the attention of the Council on a priority which, initially, had not been universally applauded. However, at the Prague preparatory meeting, it had seemed to be universally acknowledged that the 2030 Agenda could not be fully implemented without the participation of all. It had been evident that the key to participation was not budgeting, but rather the political will to involve various stakeholders in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as their readiness to participate.

10. The Czech Republic had celebrated 25 years of independence in January 2018, and October 2018 would mark the centenary of the foundation of independent Czechoslovakia. The principles upon which independent Czechoslovakia had been founded were as valid in 2018 as they had been in 1918; democracy, freedom, peace, rule of law and justice had made Czechoslovakia one of the most prosperous countries prior to the Second World War and were at the core of the 2030 Agenda, which provided a unique opportunity to broaden the inclusiveness of the political process, find new ways to promote open participation and seek out those left behind.

11. When drafting the new national strategy for sustainable development, his Government had decided

to make the process as participatory as possible. It had crowdsourced ideas for the strategy, had conducted six workshops on the identified target areas and incorporated the outcomes into the first draft of the document. More than 800 people and 200 organizations had been consulted. The participatory process had been concluded with two public hearings and presentations in both chambers of the Czech Parliament. Following two years of deliberations, the Government had adopted the strategic framework in April 2017. While the process had been demanding, time-consuming and sometimes frustrating, it had enabled the Government to raise awareness about the 2030 Agenda and create a sense of ownership among stakeholders. Given that the implementation of the strategy could not succeed without the active participation of all, the Czech Republic had developed a web-based platform on which any company, public institution, non-governmental organization (NGO) or individual would be able to submit and register their voluntary commitments to sustainable development. The platform would also allow users to share good practices and search for partner organizations.

12. With regard to the environment, the public had been included in decision-making in several areas, including nature protection and environmental impact assessments. The public had been consulted on a revision to the national parks policy. The Government had launched a campaign for more balanced national park management and clear rules for nature protection, in which members of the public had been able to voice their opinions. The analysis had shown that national parks, and nature in general, including related sports activities, played an important role in the lives of citizens. The campaign had resulted in legislation that strengthened nature protection in the country, had created a strong sense of ownership for natural heritage and had given citizens the tools to significantly influence decision-making.

13. **Mr. Londoño Zurek** (General Director of the Presidential Agency for International Cooperation of Colombia) said that his country had participated actively in the preparatory meetings, which had served to increase awareness of sustainable development challenges and to reaffirm international commitments by revitalizing global partnerships, increasing global solidarity and strengthening actions to promote the active participation of all. In Colombia, achieving a stable and lasting peace would guarantee the necessary conditions for the full and effective implementation of the 2030 Agenda in all regions.

14. In order to achieve sustainable development, there must be opportunities for a full, productive life, without distinctions. For that reason, his Government sought to address the structural causes of armed conflict and close the socioeconomic gaps between citizens and regions. The peace agreement provided an unprecedented opportunity to reinforce recent development efforts, which would help to bring about peace as well as protect the environment. Efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda and the peace agreement were complemented by cooperation with the international community, including through the United Nations Post-Conflict Multi-Partner Trust Fund for Colombia.

15. In February 2015, a high-level inter-institutional commission had been established by presidential decree to implement the 2030 Agenda. It had played a vital role in facilitating coordination between the Government and civil society in order to ensure dialogue and promote joint action. In March 2018, the Government had adopted a policy document which served as a long-term road map for the design and implementation of policies and programmes related to the Sustainable Development Goals with a view to guiding the work of local governments. The policy document included a territorial implementation strategy to facilitate the sharing of good practices at the local level. Given the importance of participation and inclusion, the document also included a section on promoting partnerships with non-governmental actors, which called for the establishment of a formal multi-actor platform to facilitate dialogue and align efforts to address sustainable development challenges. The Government was conducting regional dialogues with the private sector, communities and local organizations to increase awareness of the active role that civil society played in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals and to highlight the significant potential of multi-actor partnerships. It was also working with the private sector to create a mechanism to collect and organize data on the contributions of the private sector in implementing the 2030 Agenda at the national level.

16. The Government reaffirmed its commitment to the Addis Ababa Action Agenda of the Third International Conference on Financing for Development, which recognized that the private sector played a key role in development and job creation. It was therefore essential to incentivize private sector participation in implementing the 2030 Agenda, bearing in mind the opportunities and returns that sustainability offered in terms of productivity, competitiveness, reputation and access to new markets. The Government of Colombia would continue to work with national and international civil society actors in implementing the 2030 Agenda and would continue efforts to integrate its experiences

and capacities to create a more sustainable, resilient and civil society.

Interactive dialogue on "Global trends and emerging issues: Building sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies in a changing world"

17. **Mr. Harris** (Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs), moderator, said that deep social, economic and environmental changes were occurring at a very rapid pace. While the focus tended to be on accelerating technological innovation, there were transformative changes in many other areas as well, which brought both great opportunities and great challenges.

18. Global economic growth projections for 2019 had been revised upwards, to 3.2 per cent. World trade growth had also accelerated, which reflected increasing global demand. Those positive developments would help to achieve progress towards the 2030 Agenda. And yet, the *World Economic Situation and Prospects as of mid-2018* report and the discussions during the April 2018 meetings of the Bretton Woods institutions had highlighted increasing risks, which included increasing and persistent global imbalances; rising levels of public and private debt; mounting threats to the multilateral system, particularly threats to the open and non-discriminatory trading system; rising inequalities within and between countries; and the effects of climate change. There was an urgent need to act jointly and effectively to address the global trends that drove many of those risks, which complicated international efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and meet related agreements, including the Paris Agreement under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015–2030 or the Addis Ababa Action Agenda.

19. The response must be as global as the trends themselves. Governments, institutions and stakeholders must come together to understand and devise solutions. Governance increasingly focused on creating spaces to bring together all necessary actors to elaborate immediate responses to current challenges and prepare for the challenges of the future. The interactive dialogue would therefore explore the critical role of stakeholder participation; good governance; and effective, inclusive and accountable institutions in addressing those trends and emerging issues, with a view to building sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies.

20. **Ms. Mizutori** (Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction), panellist, said that, according to the 2030 Agenda, disaster risk reduction and resilience-building were critical to long-term development and the eradication of poverty. Each year, disasters displaced over 20 million people, pushed 26 million into poverty and destroyed years of development gains. At the same time, vulnerability and exposure to disaster risk was increasing due to poverty and inequality, poorly planned rapid urbanization, extreme weather conditions and environmental degradation. There was a clear interlinkage between disaster risk reduction, sustainable development and climate change; it would not be possible to achieve one without the other, and they should be addressed together. An inclusive, all-of-society approach to disaster management as outlined in the Sendai Framework must be adopted to reduce existing levels of risk and avoid future risk. Stakeholders, particularly women, older persons, persons with disabilities, youth and children, and indigenous peoples, could provide a unique contribution to risk management based on their knowledge and experiences, enriching strategies and policies for disaster risk reduction at the national, local and community levels. The Sendai Framework, negotiated in close collaboration with all stakeholders, recognized that, while States had the overall responsibility for reducing disaster risk, it was a shared responsibility among Governments and relevant stakeholders. The Framework laid out concrete roles, responsibilities and activities to be undertaken by Governments and various stakeholder groups and highlighted the importance of collecting risk information and assessing the vulnerability of exposed populations. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction worked with local governments under the "Making cities resilient" campaign, had developed a private sector network to encourage risk-informed approaches to new investments and economic developments, and was developing a strategy to collaborate with civil society. The Office also brought together stakeholders at global and regional platforms for disaster risk reduction and promoted their engagement in policy development. The next Global Platform for Disaster Risk Reduction would be held in Geneva in May 2019.

21. In May 2018, she had visited several cities affected by the great east-Japan earthquake and tsunami, organizing her itinerary around the theme of inclusivity and resilience. She had met a group of disabled people who had prepared for disasters by creating an extensive network among groups of people with the same disabilities; however, due to the loss of basic services, including electricity and public transportation, they had been isolated and unable to fully understand what had

been happening. As a result, they had learned that the network had to be embedded in the wider community so that people without disabilities could locate and rescue vulnerable individuals. She had also visited the ruins of an elementary school, where 74 of the 108 pupils had been washed away by the tsunami. One father, who spent his weekends at the site receiving visitors from around the world, had given her a tour, explaining that the evacuation plan had not been appropriate, which had made the school unsafe. His mission was to continue to tell the story so that the memory would not fade and all schools in the world would one day be made safe and resilient. The youth had also told their stories. She had visited a children's centre in Ishinomaki, run by Save the Children International with support from the local government. A few young women, who had experienced the disaster, had been organizing events for children to teach them how to prepare for disasters in a fun way. She had also met a group of women who worked with the local government to build back better. In their village, where one in fifteen people had died or were still missing, they actively participated in the planning of housing so that the older persons would share a semi-detached house with a young family and widowers who had become friends at the evacuation centre could live together. Those examples illustrated how stakeholders could work together to manage disaster risk, build back better and make societies resilient. The people she had spoken with had all expressed their sincere hope that the United Nations would drive resilience efforts. Japan was a developed country with a fairly advanced disaster risk reduction policy. It was easy to imagine the more desperate voices that would come from developing countries where disaster risk reduction policies were still to be established. The international community must work for them.

22. **Mr. Mohieldin** (Senior Vice-President for the 2030 Development Agenda, United Nations Relations and Partnerships of the World Bank Group), panellist, said that change was happening rapidly and, in many cases, policymakers and institutions were unable to keep up. There were a number of global megatrends that needed to be addressed. Demographic transitions and urbanization trends gave cause for concern. Currently, over 4 billion people, more than half of the global population, lived in cities. By 2050, the urban population would double, with nearly 70 per cent of people living in cities. If no action was taken, 1 billion people would be living in urban slums, and the majority of the extreme poor would continue to live in rural areas. The World Bank also emphasized the importance of examining the links between fragility and violence and encouraged disaster risk management to be taken more seriously. Currently, 1.5 billion people lived in countries affected by repeated cycles of violence. By 2030, if no action was taken, half of the world's extreme poor would live in conflict areas. In the past decade, the number of people affected by natural disasters had tripled, reaching 2 billion. In some cases, natural disasters had been strongly correlated with megatrends in climate and resources. Since 1980, low-income countries had accounted for only 9 per cent of disaster events but 48 per cent of disaster-related deaths. It was clear that the burden of disasters, conflicts, crime and violence fell disproportionately on the poor. In order to address those global megatrends, the World Bank had a large portfolio for disaster risk management, which had increased steadily from $3.7 billion in 2012 to $4.5 billion in 2017. While disaster risk management accounted for approximately 10 per cent of the World Bank portfolio, it was not enough.

23. With regard to finance at the local level, the international community must help cities and local communities, especially rural communities, to raise funds. There must be strategies in place to allow cities to enhance resilience programmes and mitigate risks through adequate funding. The World Bank City Creditworthiness Initiative aimed to strengthen the financial performance of local governments by training municipal officials to maximize their financial capacity for development, as it was not enough to have a central government with adequate resources and discipline.

24. While technology and innovation could be disruptive and have negative implications, they could also make significant positive contributions. The international community should leverage technology for the benefit of society. For example, the introduction of digital payments in Kenya had enabled a more inclusive approach to development and had enhanced remittances from workers in urban areas to their families in rural areas by lowering transaction costs more than 90 per cent. In India, the Aadhaar digital identification system covered more than 1 billion people, enabling many of the poor to access services more easily. In addition to the project's important impact on financial inclusion, it ensured that every person was counted and could be located to receive assistance. In addition, support was being provided to create smart cities. By 2020, over $1.5 trillion would be spent on technologies to support city resilience. While it was important to discuss infrastructure, resilience and risk management, there must also be adequate investment in human capital, including in projects to build capacity in education and health.

25. **Ms. Gornick** (Professor of Political Science and Sociology, City University of New York, and Director of the Stone Center on Socio-Economic Inequality),

panellist, accompanying her statement with a digital slide presentation, said that LIS was a cross-national research centre and data archive located in Luxembourg, which provided cross-national, over-time microdata. It was a venue for teaching, training, research-sharing and the development of methodological standards, and it had a long history of collaboration with supranational organizations, including the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, the International Labour Organization and various United Nations agencies.

26. The developers and data users believed that LIS and its data had tremendous potential to support implementing and monitoring the 2030 Agenda, particularly Sustainable Development Goals 1 and 10 on poverty and inequality. The centre's main value added was the labour-intensive work of data harmonization. LIS received data sets from around the world and recoded them into a common template to maximize comparability. Its primary focus was on income data, but many data sets also covered the labour market, consumption and wealth variables from approximately 50 mostly high- and upper-middle-income countries. The microdata were organized into repeated cross-sections at 3- to 5-year intervals from approximately 1980 to 2016; they were therefore well-suited to tracking trends. Access to the microdata was provided via a remote execution system to eligible researchers from universities, government agencies and NGOs.

27. She presented three charts to illustrate the types of analysis that could be done using the LIS data sets. The first reported poverty rates in non-elderly households as at 2013 in 27 countries, at 40, 50 and 60 per cent of each country's median household income. The chart could be reproduced at a single point in time, over a number of years or for specific subgroups based on gender, age, education, family structure, migration status or urbanicity. The second chart reported poverty rates based on income before and after public income transfers and taxes were taken into account and included poverty rates based on market or private income. In the third chart, the same data was displayed on two axes, showing both relative poverty rates and poverty rates based on an absolute poverty threshold. The LIS data sets could enable flexible construction of indicators and outcomes for both levels and trends. The data could also be used in more complex ways to study the causes, nature and consequences of poverty and inequality, including with the use of sophisticated statistical modelling.

28. Her colleagues in the international community of data providers believed that effective monitoring of the Sustainable Development Goals required extensive, high-quality data that were comparable over time and across space and could be disaggregated. There was a need for microdata with multiple dimensions and outcomes, such as income, consumption, assets, inclusion and health, especially in middle- and low-income countries. Financial and technical investments in high-quality microdata at the national and international level were crucial, along with efforts to increase the availability of comparable microdata for research and analysis. Effective policy analysis required high-quality microdata to be complemented by national and subnational macrodata on corresponding policies and institutions.

29. **Mr. Harris** (Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that preparedness was not enough to ensure resilience. The international community must therefore find solutions to organize disaster response beyond the community level.

30. **Ms. Vives Balmaña** (Andorra) said that her Government had introduced an initiative in 2017 that allowed citizens to make suggestions concerning the national budget, thereby allowing them to contribute to decision-making. The initiative having been successful, the Government had received a number of suggestions.

31. Andorra was a mountainous country in which snowfall could cause avalanches. As a result, school safety was a priority. There were rigorous building requirements, and safety drills were conducted with students. Given the prevalence of winter sports, the private sector also played a role in disaster preparedness. For example, the mobile application Alpify helped to locate victims during avalanches. She hoped that those small-scale suggestions could be adapted to contribute to the well-being of all in the face of larger natural disasters.

32. She asked how women and youth could be included in the development of disaster risk management policies.

33. **Mr. Srivihok** (Observer for Thailand) said that his Government had participated in the preparatory meetings leading up to the special meeting and believed that open and constructive discussions between Member States and stakeholders helped to shape the way forward for inclusive and sustainable development, leaving no one behind.

34. Genuine resilience and sustainability began at the community level. With their knowledge, expertise and resources, local communities could offer unique solutions to local problems. More must be done at the

national and international levels to encourage their involvement in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. His Government therefore supported international awards such as the Equator Prize, sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme, and was pleased to note that a Thai village had won the award in 2017 for a project related to forest conservation and disaster protection. Local governments also played an important role in localizing the Sustainable Development Goals, and civil society helped to build capacity in local communities and provide feedback on government policies. Academia could help to raise awareness of the Goals and provide evidence-based data to accelerate their achievement. Furthermore, investment in sustainable development must be made more attractive to the private sector. Companies must be aware that integrating the Goals and promoting responsible practices in their corporate strategies would make their businesses more profitable and sustainable in the long term.

35. The Thai approach to development, based on the country's sufficiency economy philosophy, focused on empowering people to lead their lives with moderation, reasonableness and prudence, guided by knowledge and virtue. The philosophy had also been incorporated in the national development plan and had guided reconstruction efforts following the 1997 Asian financial crisis and the 2006 Indian Ocean tsunami. His Government wished to share the philosophy with interested partners around the world and hoped that it could contribute to global efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. Thailand fully supported the crucial role of the Council as an effective and relevant United Nations body in providing policy guidance to Member States in the promotion of sustainable, resilient and inclusive societies for all.

36. **Mr. Ogilvy** (Observer for the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)) said that the 2030 Agenda provided perhaps the most sophisticated framework for economic, social and environmental progress and had been developed through one of the most inclusive processes ever seen at the United Nations. And yet, in many countries, people felt excluded from progress, opportunity and the benefits of globalization. Inequality was rising, and unemployment, especially among young people, was not declining fast enough. In countries at all levels of development, there was declining trust in the Governments and institutions that were supposed to serve the people and help deliver on the ambitious 2030 Agenda. In OECD countries, for example, only 43 per cent of citizens trusted their national Government. People were questioning multilateralism, the very architecture that had been designed to help level the international playing field, provide opportunity and tackle global challenges.

37. The OECD was committed to doing its part to help reverse that tide. The annual ministerial meeting, entitled "Reshaping the foundations of multilateralism for more responsible, effective and inclusive outcomes", to be held in May 2018, would serve as an opportunity to launch a new OECD framework on policy action for inclusive growth, which aimed to consolidate a long-standing body of work on the drivers of inclusion and inclusive growth to help Governments promote more equitable distribution of the benefits of economic growth. The OECD would continue to play its part to advance inclusion in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and remained committed to working with and for the United Nations.

38. **Mr. Harris** (Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) wondered why stakeholder groups did not feel included in the participatory processes and what needed to happen to promote their engagement.

39. **Ms. Nicholls** (Canada) said that she was encouraged by the increasing use of data, evidence and research in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, as well as the involvement of academics and universities from both the North and the South. She asked what could be done to further consolidate available data in support of the Sustainable Development Goals and promote efforts to bring academics and experts together to enhance knowledge-sharing.

40. **Ms. Doherty** (Observer for the Congregation of Our Lady of Charity of the Good Shepherd) said that her organization worked largely outside of the political arena in over 70 countries throughout the world. In order to make progress, the international community must address the divide that existed between mainstream society and the people she represented. It must provide resources to the most vulnerable and excluded groups and bring them into the political arena to discuss how they wanted to participate and what could be done to address growing inequality and threats from conflicts, climate change and disasters. Those groups worked within the boundaries of their own empowerment but were unable to contribute to the overall local or national development.

41. **Mr. Harris** (Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) asked how to harmonize the need to provide financial arrangements and build resilience at the local level with a financing system that primarily functioned at the national level.

He wondered how to make use of all types of financing flows and resources at the local level in a way that facilitated the participation of local stakeholder groups, who should be driving resilience-building.

42. **Mr. Mohieldin** (Senior Vice-President for the 2030 Development Agenda, United Nations Relations and Partnerships of the World Bank Group) said that there was growing evidence to suggest that lack of action at the local level had contributed to failures in achieving the Millennium Development Goals and could threaten the ability to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals. At the World Bank, dedicated groups focused on rural and urban development. In collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme, the Bank had examined 17 countries of varying capacities, sizes and incomes to identify possible areas of work.

43. First, data availability was essential and required a significant investment at the subnational level. In the past, the focus had been on enhancing the capacities of statistical authorities at the national level while neglecting the mobilization of good information at the local level. However, adequate data at the local level was essential to meeting the targets set forth in global initiatives and agreements, including the Sendai Framework, the Paris Agreement, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the 2030 Agenda.

44. Second, there must be more domestic resource mobilization at the local level. Inefficient national fiscal systems lacked the capacity to enhance local funding. The World Bank had identified more than 19 possible sources of local funding that did not rely on market dynamics or the private sector. However, in practice, only 2 of the 19 were mobilized: transfers from central Governments and informal levies on community members. The international community must work on the financial disciplines and frameworks that had been established. There were many good examples, including from non-OECD countries.

45. Finally, technology must play a role. There were several examples in which building smart cities enabled the Government to do a better job. Smart cities required sophisticated information and communications technologies but also depended on the availability of basic data, including information about individuals. Given that the problems had been identified and systems were in place to address them, more effort must be made to collect and analyse data and enable financing.

46. **Ms. Mizutori** (Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction) said that empowering local governments was an important issue for disaster risk reduction as well. The Sendai Framework included a target to substantially increase the number of countries with national and local disaster risk reduction strategies by 2020. However, many local governments lacked the manpower and capacity to develop those strategies. Furthermore, disaggregated data was needed to achieve inclusivity. That data could often only be gathered at the local level, where capacity was lacking. As a result, her office was trying to work with local communities to determine how to address that challenge.

47. **Ms. Gornick** (Professor of Political Science and Sociology, City University of New York and Director of the Stone Center on Socio-Economic Inequality) said that, in the past five years, there had been a movement among organizations like hers to develop systems to increase the availability of their information. They were seeking partnerships to build websites, designing online table-makers to allow people without programming skills to access the data, publishing a graph of the month, summarizing academic papers in four-paragraph briefs and making themselves available to journalists and organizations. However, there must be a clear voice to indicate that those initiatives were needed.

48. While organizations like hers shared a number of goals with groups inside the World Bank, OECD, United Nations agencies and other institutions, there was no mechanism in place to systematize those links in order to benefit from their extraordinary amount of data and knowledge generated by those organizations.

49. **Mr. Gonzalez** (Colombia) said that his Government had created the "Vive Digital" programme to close the communication gap and transfer technology to the most remote regions of the country. In addition to the fibre-optic network that had already been established, the programme sought to connect 28 municipal capitals and 19 departmental townships. The high-speed network helped to establish a number of communication mechanisms that benefited employment, governance and health. It had also opened channels of two-way communication between rural and urban areas in the most remote regions of Colombia.

50. **Ms. Gornick** (Professor of Political Science and Sociology, City University of New York, and Director of the Stone Center on Socio-Economic Inequality) said that members of her organization wished to hear from people working at the national and international levels so that they could determine how to improve the availability and usefulness of their data and research. She encouraged participants to contact her organization, which was trying to become more public-facing and did not want to guess at what was needed.

51. **Mr. Mohieldin** (Senior Vice-President for the 2030 Development Agenda, United Nations Relations and Partnerships of the World Bank Group) said that he appreciated the emphasis on a holistic and collaborative approach to dealing with challenges. The United Nations Secretary-General and the President of the World Bank had recently signed a strategic partnership framework for the 2030 Agenda, which covered four areas that had been discussed in the special meeting: the implementation of the 2030 Agenda through partnerships, the humanitarian-development nexus, data and climate action. He wished to remind participants that multilateralism existed to support activities at the local level, not within multilateral institutions.

52. **Ms. Mizutori** (Assistant Secretary-General and Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Disaster Risk Reduction) said that the combination of traditional knowledge and technology was vital to finding solutions for disaster risk reduction, and it was therefore important to involve older persons. Her office would hold a number of regional platforms in 2018, the first of which would be held in Colombia in June and would examine how to support local governments. National Governments must collaborate with stakeholders, give them space to work on disaster risk reduction and play a strong public role in order to avoid a piecemeal approach.

53. **Mr. Harris** (Assistant Secretary-General for Economic Development and Chief Economist of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs) said that, while the 2030 Agenda had been developed in an inclusive and participatory manner, stakeholder groups clearly felt that their participation was no longer as inclusive. That sense of exclusion might be driving perceptions of inadequacy and declining trust in institutions, which could, in part, explain the challenges to multilateralism. Those challenges were a very serious wake-up call for the United Nations, an organization predicated upon multilateralism which faced global challenges that could only be addressed with a multilateral approach. He encouraged participants to give greater consideration to what they could do in their respective spheres of influence to overcome that divide, bring people back to the table and facilitate their participation, particularly those who were most vulnerable, as their input would lead to the development of truly resilient strategies to address the challenges going forward.

Interactive dialogue on "Innovative policy approaches and technologies to foster participation of all"

54. **Mr. Shank** (Communications Director for Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance), moderator, said that the Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance was an organization of vanguard climate leaders, cities with the highest targets and ambitions concerning carbon emissions reduction, renewable energy and waste. In his experience, many cities, both big and small, had robust sustainability or climate teams with incredible policy and technical expertise but little to no community engagement or communications staff. That city-level government dynamic could be found at all levels, as there was a tendency to build and market policies without involving the community in the process.

55. In order to promote community involvement, local governments should consider adopting a campaign-style approach to curry favour with constituencies and try to gain the support of each individual. Crowdsourcing was another useful tactic; however, it must be conducted in a format that was accessible to all, not just those with access to the Internet. Consensus-building should be a priority, and it must involve the entire community. For example, he had seen too many politicians raise the issue of sustainability or resilience late in their term, without building consensus among the community, which allowed the next politician to reverse the work that had been done. Communication was also essential. When communities felt that they were a part of the movement, they did not see the challenge as daunting or demoralizing. Some cities were very good at displaying community contributions, albeit on the Internet. If those tactics were well implemented, they would prevent conflict and lead to more concrete commitments from communities.

56. **Ms. Belhadj** (President of the Groupe Tawhida Ben Cheikh, Women's Health Research and Action), panellist, said that her organization was a grassroots NGO based in Tunisia that focused on women's reproductive rights and health. Tunisia was at a crossroads of cultural transition. In the aftermath of the 2011 political change, there had been a rise in conservative attitudes and opportunities for democratization. While the 2014 Constitution had laid the groundwork for civil and individual rights, obsolete laws and practices were still in effect. In the past two years, civil society had played a major role in identifying barriers to civil and individual liberties and had organized into advocacy and pressure groups. Community participation in those processes had proven to be the cornerstone for triggering change.

57. Her organization had launched an initiative to allow women to speak out, share knowledge about health, improve access to reproductive health and general health care, and change attitudes. Over time, women had begun to request information about other social and political issues, including women's rights, property rights, communication within the family, citizenship, the mitigation of gender-based violence and the prevention and management of substance abuse. To fulfil those requests, her organization had partnered with other civil society organizations with the relevant expertise, which had had a snowball effect on partnership-building and had generated actual results in building women's resilience. The local initiative had then begun to engage with national government institutions and civil society at large. When Tunisia had submitted its report for the universal periodic review, partner civil society organizations had built a coalition and submitted shadow reports. They had worked with the Ministry of Human Rights, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the mission in Geneva. As a result of that strong advocacy platform, the Government had been willing to address some of the issues raised by civil society and had deferred more sensitive issues for the future.

58. Civil society organizations in Tunisia had also been working with parliamentarians and government institutions to update laws. In 2017, a number of significant amendments had been made. The Government had approved a comprehensive law on violence against women; had amended article 227 bis of the penal code, which allowed charges to be dropped against a perpetrator of sexual assault of a minor if the victim married the offender; had cancelled a circular that made it illegal for Tunisian women to marry non-Muslim men; and had endorsed a law on preventing and combating trafficking in persons. More recently, Tunisia had authorized citizens and NGOs to bring cases to the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights. With those advances, national laws were beginning to align with the 2014 Constitution.

59. An initiative that had begun with the aim of strengthening community capacity on health had enhanced resilience and given community members the ability to demand to exercise their rights. The snowball effect on partnership-building, both with the Government and civil society, had created new levels of consensus-building, had enabled people to speak out on human rights issues and had led to changes in the law. While the original objective had been to meet targets related to Sustainable Development Goal 3 on universal access to sexual and reproductive health, the initiative had smoothly embraced a number of other Goals. She hoped that the experiences of her organization demonstrated how community mobilization could lead to "snowball partnerships" with civil society organizations in order to engage government institutions in consensus-building and sensitive human rights issues. Goal 16, on peace, justice and strong institutions, was fully embraced in that model. The examples that she had shared demonstrated the inclusiveness and willingness of government officials to allow the voices of civil society organizations to be heard. However, she did not currently have the assurance that inclusiveness would continue in her country. As a result, her organization had already begun to bring in and invest in young people, encouraging youth organizations to shadow the coalition that had been established during the preparation for the universal periodic review.

60. **Mr. Shank** (Communications Director for Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance) asked for a definition of snowball partnership-building and how it was done.

61. **Ms. Belhadj** (President of the Groupe Tawhida Ben Cheikh, Women's Health Research and Action) said that, at the request of community members, her organization had called on other civil society organizations to address their needs. Those organizations had found themselves in an alliance, which had been further strengthened when they had identified common issues under the universal periodic review. That exercise had provided the momentum to organize a united front. Previously, civil society organizations had been working in a fragmented way, competing for resources, even though their work had sometimes overlapped. By working together, they could push government institutions to allow their voices to be heard. Using the instruments available to them, such as the shadow report, they had been able to engage the Human Rights Council to put further pressure on the Government, which had led to partial results.

62. **Mr. Tena** (Project Manager for the Participatory Budgeting Project), panellist, accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that participatory budgeting engaged people better than any other governance innovation, according to thousands of city leaders across the world who had adopted it. In its simplest form, participatory budgeting entailed allowing residents to decide how to spend a portion of the public budget. In the United States, for example, residents brainstormed ideas and worked with government agencies to develop those ideas into project proposals. The community then voted on the proposals, and the winning projects were funded. Participatory budgeting required inclusion and equity to be successful; it should reverse power imbalances, not reinforce them.

63. His organization had been successful in making participatory budgeting more inclusive and equitable by incorporating five key elements. First, budgets should include money that mattered to the target communities. For example, in order to engage young people, there should be funding for schools or youth programming. It was also important to consider the scale of the process and ensure that the amount of money was substantial enough to make a real impact. Second, the participatory budgeting process must be led by people from target communities. His organization always began processes by convening a steering committee of local community members and organizations, especially groups that worked with low-income people and other marginalized groups. Third, the process should be designed to be more inclusive and accessible. His organization held meetings at convenient times and locations and provided food, childcare and interpretation and translation services. For example, voting could be held at a school during lunch or on the street in front of a subway station, among other ways to encourage new people to participate. Fourth, extra effort must be made to reach out to communities that tended not to participate actively, which meant hiring canvassers and special organizers to conduct outreach. Lastly, during the process itself, equity criteria should be used to ensure that the projects included on the ballot would benefit the communities with the greatest needs.

64. He had run a participatory budgeting process in Boston. Under a project entitled "Youth lead the change", the mayor had allocated $1 million of the budget to initiatives selected by teenagers. Two youth leaders had been hired to support the process. They had begun with simple, direct investments in park renovations, but with experience, they had become more nuanced and strategic in selecting projects. By the third year, the youth goals had begun to frame the entire participatory budgeting process. Instead of asking how $1 million could be used to improve Boston, they had asked more focused questions, such as how $1 million could be used to make mental health a bigger part of everyday life or create customers for young entrepreneurs. It might be possible to apply those principles to the Sustainable Development Goals.

65. Participatory budgeting was the ideal vehicle to translate global goals to all levels of action, especially at the local level. It was the key to scaling them down to make them relevant to the individual. Those who were often left out of decision-making processes were hit first and worst by the issues that the Sustainable Development Goals were meant to mitigate. The international community must therefore harness the expertise of those groups. Furthermore, it would never be possible to foster sustainable governance without the complete, meaningful empowerment of young people.

66. **Mr. Shank** (Communications Director for Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance) asked whether the $1 million project had been replicated in other cities and how that process could be scaled up, for example, in other forms of government or within the private sector in Boston.

67. **Mr. Tena** (Project Manager for the Participatory Budgeting Project) said that participatory budgeting was not unique to the United States. It had begun in Brazil in the late 1980s, and the first process in North America had occurred in Toronto in the 2000s. It was currently occurring in over 30 cities in the United States. In New York City, city councillors opened their budgets for a participatory budgeting process, and the mayor had recently announced that participatory budgeting would be included in every high school in the city.

68. In terms of scaling, it was important to bear in mind that participatory budgeting did not intrinsically prescribe the solution to any group. It was also important not to blindly prescribe participatory budgeting. His organization sought to train the trainers in a city or government agency, ensuring that participatory budgeting was institutionalized and could grow on its own.

69. In terms of how that process affected other forms of government, the focus was often on the benefits for those who participated in the participatory budgeting process rather than the government agency. Just as young people and residents were being lifted up, employees were also being given a way meet with community members to discuss their passions. For example, people in transportation departments were not trained to facilitate community meetings, but participatory budgeting gave them a way to interface collaboratively with residents.

70. **Mr. Shank** (Communications Director for Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance) said that participatory budgeting worked everywhere. In Afghanistan, community development councils used all of the same criteria to decide which projects to fund. Sometimes that process required more time and did not provide a quick return on investment, especially in a war zone. As was clear in Afghanistan, Iraq and other countries, initiatives could not last if governments did not take the time to involve local stakeholders.

71. **Mr. Manoharan** (Professor and Programme Director for the Global Comparative Public Administration Programme at the University of Massachusetts Boston), panellist, accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that

e-government was an important tool in improving government performance and communication. The United Nations had been one of the first organizations to recognize its importance in the early 2000s. Furthermore, the 2030 Agenda recognized that the spread of information and communications technology and global interconnectedness had great potential to accelerate human progress, to bridge the digital divide and to develop knowledge societies. E-government could improve services and information provided to citizens and transform the relationship between government and citizens.

72. His research, which he had begun at Rutgers University at the E-Governance Institute, focused on e-government and mobile government, or the use of mobile technologies to provide services and enable citizens to offer feedback. In order to transform e-government into smart government, it was necessary to bridge the digital divide, for which mobile technologies had great potential, and build the capacity of citizens, administrators and civil society to use those new technologies. Much of his research had focused on evaluating the performance of city-level e-government. He used a 100-point scale divided into five categories: privacy, usability, content, services and citizen participation. Significant emphasis was placed on platforms and official websites. It was important to determine how governments were connecting to citizens and stakeholders through their official websites, integrating social media into those websites, integrating the websites into mobile government and making them mobile compatible.

73. The E-Governance Institute had been conducting the research since 2003, evaluating cities every two years. While governments had been increasingly adopting e-government and information technology, city governments tended to place less emphasis on citizen participation and privacy. Robust privacy policies were necessary to promote citizen trust and, by extension, encourage citizens to use the websites to participate in decision-making. Currently, citizen participation and engagement were increasingly happening on social media. Rather than offer their own platforms, governments should integrate social media platforms on their websites. He presented a chart of the 20 top-ranking cities from the past three surveys, which showed that many of the cities were unable to sustain their performance. In addition, there appeared to be an increasing digital divide, which was conceptualized in the study as the difference in the performance of the cities from OECD countries and non-OECD countries.

74. Technology platforms must be more inclusive of vulnerable populations, such as older persons and persons with disabilities. Governments must address the digital divide and accessibility issues and incorporate inclusive design, usability and readability on website platforms. Citizen participation could only be possible if citizens were informed. Governments and agencies therefore had a duty to inform the public about their functions, projects and budgets. There was a growing emphasis on integrating technology for sustainability and resilience. Crisis communication and emergency response were emphasized, along with the use of social media during emergencies. Additionally, many city and state governments were developing official communication channels. They had appointed public information, emergency response and chief resilience officers, and many cities had developed resilience strategies. The concept of smart cities should be expanded to include smart villages and smart areas in rural communities.

75. In order to enable technology to foster participation and promote sustainable development, there must be connectivity. The infrastructure should be examined, as many rural areas in the United States and across the world did not have proper Internet connectivity. There should be more emphasis on the use of broadband, which would involve significant intergovernmental collaboration. Governments should also provide incentives to the private sector to make improvements. Recent research had shown that areas with less Internet connectivity tended to be less developed economically and have fewer jobs. Governments must also build capacity and determine what skills public administrators needed in new smart cities. Additionally, universities should become innovative, experiment with online learning and try to train civil servants across the world through online platforms. Governments should encourage cooperation and collaboration. The international community must begin to develop a global and comparative perspective, and graduate students in public administration and business must look at cases from across the world.

76. **Mr. Shank** (Communications Director for Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance) asked for an example of a mobile technology or platform that enhanced democracy or citizen participation or was inclusive of vulnerable populations.

77. **Mr. Manoharan** (Professor and Programme Director for the Global Comparative Public Administration Programme at the University of Massachusetts Boston) said that the official website of Prague had ranked highly in the Global E-Governance Survey owing to its robust privacy policy. The website attempted to address all concerns and provided good contact information so that citizens could reach out if

[illegible] had any questions about privacy policies. In terms of usability, the official website of the city of Tokyo was a good example. It was very user-friendly; everything was categorized and easy to locate. In terms of content, the New York City website was a great example. It also included a platform that allowed users to search open data and did a good job of connecting all of its social media channels. The website of the city of Seoul was a great example of services and citizen participation. Seoul had ranked first in the survey because it stood out in terms of citizen participation. The website incorporated a platform on which citizens could submit complaints, via social media, mobile application or the Internet. The complaints were then transferred to integrated receivers and forwarded to the respective department manager. The websites of Shanghai and Singapore were also great examples of citizen participation. The Singapore website included a platform that not only enabled citizens to provide feedback to the government but also allowed citizens to participate in solving public problems. Given that citizens today were very informed and had access to all of the information, governments should acknowledge that potential and make them equal stakeholders.

78. **Mr. Shank** (Communications Director for Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance) said that cities, and governments in general, tended to overwhelm their websites with too much text. The Tokyo website did a great job of providing numerous images and clickable content with very little text.

79. **Mr. Marek** (ERCTech), panellist, accompanying his statement with a digital slide presentation, said that ERCTech, which stood for Effective Recycling Concrete Technology, was a European company based in Prague with over 10 years of research and development. The company was revolutionizing the waste and construction industries with its patented, unique solution that recycled 100 per cent of inert concrete demolition waste to be reused in concrete plants, replacing natural aggregates like gravel and sand. With regard to sustainability, the company provided eco-friendly concrete and concrete products that were 15 to 30 per cent cheaper than normal concrete, reduced CO_2 emissions and used zero-waste technology. Under the circular economy model, a building at the end of its lifetime could be demolished to begin the process anew. The concrete produced by ERCTech was used in building and transport construction, prefabrication, transported concrete and manual and individual processing. Materials could be sourced from any demolished building or construction waste. Globally, 2.4 billion tons of inert construction and demolition waste were produced every year. Reusing those resources in place of excavated aggregate could save $115 billion, cut 620 million tons of CO_2 emissions and prevent the extraction of 11 per cent of global reserves of natural resources every year. Nevertheless, the use of 100 per cent of inert construction and demolition waste would represent only 5 per cent of total annual construction.

80. The concept developed by ERCTech could play a role in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. For example, under Goal 1, on poverty, it could provide affordable housing and employment. Under Goal 8, on employment, it could deliver approximately 8 million jobs in primary and secondary construction industries. Under Goal 9, on industry, innovation and infrastructure, it could stimulate the construction industry and provide clean, eco-friendly technology. Under Goals 11 and 12, on sustainable cities and responsible consumption and production, the closed-loop recycling system could contribute to the total elimination of inert construction and demolition waste and support strategic planning for new construction with the removal of old buildings. Under Goals 13, 14 and 15, relating to the environment, it was reducing CO_2 emissions and energy consumption and could definitively end inert construction and demolition waste landfilling. Under Goal 17, on partnerships, the Czech Republic and ERCTech hoped to develop the concept on a global scale, in cooperation with representatives from the waste and construction industries.

81. **Mr. Shank** (Communications Director for Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance) said that the ERCTech concept was a great example of a tech solution that could be scaled up; he wondered how to incorporate a component that fostered the participation of all. Given that demolitions were often big projects that attracted a lot of attention and spectators in the United States, they could be used to engage the community and discuss zero waste, economic and health benefits and other issues.

82. **Ms. Fall Tall** (Observer for the African Union) said that global challenges such as poverty, exclusion and discrimination also existed in African countries. On behalf of the African Union, she requested that poverty should be given priority in the global development agenda and that the specific situation in Africa should be taken into account with regard to the Sustainable Development Goals. By doing so, discussions on poverty could be accompanied by inclusive development action at the territorial level, which required the participation of individuals and communities. While growth rates across Africa were at 7 to 10 per cent, poverty was increasing. As that issue was being discussed, it was important to ensure that participation played a significant role.

83. Participation also had a role to play in financing. While international cooperation had achieved a great deal, civil society in Africa called for evidence-based assessments of financing opportunities to determine whether people were happy with the quality of finance. The African Union welcomed a territorial approach and hoped that women's leadership could be supported. In Africa, approximately 35 per cent of heads of household were women, and yet, they were deprived of their right to land. They worked between 12 and 18 hours a day. The African Union wished to discuss those issues further, as they required urgent attention. It also wished to revisit certain issues regarding education, health and agriculture that impeded development in Africa.

84. **Ms. Kim** (Republic of Korea) said that her Government had adopted online and offline participation policies, including participatory budgeting, mobile idea platforms and public services design groups. A robust and vocal civil society was a strong indicator of government confidence and stability. However, innovative technology designed to promote civic participation and engagement was sometimes used by populist or extremist groups to speak out against the silent majority. Her Government expressed concern about emerging technology tools in the hands of an opinionated populace and the corresponding indifference of Government and policymakers. She asked how to distinguish between sound public opinion and the voices of certain interest groups.

85. **Mr. Motter** (Observer for the Inter-Parliamentary Union) said that the budget was the most important piece of legislation adopted by parliaments each year. Every city council and parliament undertook negotiations before adoption. As a result, the initial budget proposed by the Government could be significantly different from the one approved by parliament. He asked how it was possible to ensure that legitimate input from citizens was included, given that the budget must consider the interests of the entire society and failure to implement citizen proposals would increase disaffection with government institutions.

86. **Mr. Shank** (Communications Director for Carbon Neutral Cities Alliance) asked the panellists to share a strategy that they were looking forward to implementing.

87. **Ms. Belhadj** (President of the Groupe Tawhida Ben Cheikh, Women's Health Research and Action) said that investing in women would lead to progress in all of the Sustainable Development Goals. Her organization planned to engage more young people and have them shadow a coalition. In a country like Tunisia, where young people constituted a sizable proportion of the population, youth participation was vital to bringing about political changes in democracy and human rights.

88. **Mr. Tena** (Project Manager for the Participatory Budgeting Project) said that, in terms of reconciling the budgeting process with what people wanted, it was important to remember that the projects were undertaken at the local level, not by parliament. In the United States, the process had been successful by ensuring that participatory budgeting was a part of planning guidelines. Without participatory budgeting, plans drafted by residents were usually not enacted, which created disillusionment. However, if participatory budgeting could be included at that level, the government could first have a conversation with residents to explain what it sought to achieve and then set aside the money so that the resulting projects could be implemented immediately. In that way, people could see the results of their efforts. While parliament determined how much money to attach to those planning processes, the actual details were established at the local level once that money had filtered through a few layers of government. He was looking forward to collaborating with people who wanted to pioneer larger participatory budgets.

89. **Mr. Manoharan** (Professor and Programme Director for the Global Comparative Public Administration Programme at the University of Massachusetts Boston) said that ensuring connectivity in rural areas required flexibility and intergovernmental collaboration. Governments had a duty to engage the silent majority by communicating with them; there must be regular reporting of government functions, both financial and non-financial.

90. He was working to finish the 2017–2018 survey on the trends of e-government across municipalities. He was also focused on bridging the divide between theory and practice; he wanted to determine what information technology and smart city skills were required in the public sector compared to what graduate programmes were offering.

91. **Mr. Marek** (ERCTech) said that his company was looking for partners to launch pilot projects in each region around the world. Perhaps the World Bank could help to provide financing.

The meeting rose at 1.10 p.m.